

What is claimed is:

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1. A program guide for an interactive information distribution system comprising:

- 5        a video layer; and  
         a graphics layer, where the graphics layer provides emphasis and de-emphasis of an object or objects in the video layer.

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10 2. The program guide of claim 1 wherein said video layer contains a video region and a graphical region.

3. The program guide of claim 1 wherein said program guide is generated in a central location of said  
15 information distribution system.

4. The program guide of claim 2 wherein the video region contains a video barker having associated audio.

20 5. The program guide of claim 2 wherein said graphical region contains a list of program titles.

6. The program guide of claim 1 wherein said emphasis and de-emphasis is performed by masking or revealing an  
25 object.

7. The program guide of claim 6 wherein, to perform said masking and revealing the graphics layer selectively changes an opacity of a region of the graphics layer.

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8. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the video layer and graphics layer are contained in an applet.

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9. The program guide of claim 1 wherein an identity of an emphasized object is controlled by a viewer.

10. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the emphasized  
5 object is a selectable object.

11. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the emphasized object is highlighted.

10 12. The program guide of claim 1 wherein said video layer contains a plurality of objects and said graphics layer emphasizes a select number of the objects and de-emphasizes a remainder of objects.

15 13. The program guide of claim 12 wherein said objects are a list of program titles.

14. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the graphics layer is prestored in a user terminal.

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15. The program guide of claim 1 wherein the graphics layer is transmitted to a user terminal.

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25 16. A method of interaction for a program guide:  
generating, within service provider equipment of an information distribution system, a bitstream representing a program guide having a video layer and a graphics layer;  
communicating said bitstream to subscriber equipment;  
converting, within said subscriber equipment, said  
30 bitstream into a display of said program guide.

17. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of  
producing a mask/reveal overlay within said subscriber equipment.

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30 26. The method of claim 25 wherein each said program  
guide has audio that is common to multiple program guides.

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28. The method of claim 16 wherein all object  
identification functions are preformed locally to the  
subscriber equipment.

29. The method of claim ~~28~~<sup>29</sup> further comprising the step of  
10 returning to the broadcast mode when a pointcast  
transmission ends.

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2. The method of claim 16 further comprising the steps  
of:  
20 selecting an emphasized object in said program guide;  
communicating the selection to service provider  
equipment; and  
sending, from said service provider equipment, a  
multi-media bitstream corresponding to said selected  
25 object.

30 <sup>33</sup>~~34~~. The method of claim 16 further comprising the steps  
of:  
selecting an emphasized object in said program guide;  
causing an event in the service provider equipment,  
where said event is on or more of tuning to an analog

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